United Nations A/68/893–S/2014/378

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
29 May 2014
English
Original: Arabic

General Assembly
Sixty-eighth session
Agenda item 70 (a)
Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Security Council
Sixty-ninth year

Identical letters dated 27 May 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I should like to convey to you the position of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the third report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014) (S/2014/365):

First, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic would like to reiterate its commitment to ensuring that humanitarian assistance reaches all persons affected by the crisis without distinction. It would also like to reiterate that it cooperates with the United Nations and its agencies in connection with this matter on the basis of respect for the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the guiding principles of United Nations humanitarian assistance in emergency situations as set out in General Assembly resolution 46/182, in particular the principle of respect for national sovereignty and the role of the State in supervising the distribution of humanitarian assistance in its territory, and for the principles of neutrality, impartiality and non-politicization. Syria furthermore reiterates that the humanitarian crisis that is developing in many parts of Syria cannot be addressed solely by providing emergency supplies to the population. Rather, it is essential to address the roots of the problem and the factors that are exacerbating it. First and foremost, that means countering and eradicating terrorism and rescinding unilateral coercive measures.

Second, in his meeting with the members of the High Relief Commission on 4 May 2014, the President of the Syrian Arab Republic stressed that the humanitarian situation and its implications was the Syrian State's top priority. He further stressed that all resources must be marshalled to meet the pressing need to

14-54267 (E) 050614 060614

Please recycle

provide shelter, food and medicine to all civilians who had been forcibly displaced as a result of the crimes committed by terrorist groups. He furthermore emphasized that the Syrian State was responsible for the welfare of all its citizens and for meeting their basic needs not only in the locations to which they have been displaced, but also in those areas that are besieged by terrorists.

Third, having considered the Secretary-General's third report, the Syrian Government would like to make the following observations:

1. It is regrettable that those United Nations officials who are responsible for drafting the above-mentioned report continue to ignore the fact that terrorism has given rise to and exacerbated the humanitarian needs in Syria. They insist on addressing the humanitarian situation in Syria in a manner that is selective, biased and politicized and that disregards the guiding principles of United Nations humanitarian assistance. Following are some examples of that:

- The report uses the term "armed opposition" to refer to terrorist organizations that the Security Council has designated as being affiliated with Al-Qaida. It is particularly puzzling that the report adopts a doubtful tone with regard to the presence of foreign terrorists in the ranks of the terrorist organizations operating in Syria. Such a position is contrary to official reports issued by many States affirming the presence of terrorists who are nationals of the reporting States and who came to fight in Syria via Turkey. It also runs counter to the experience of the United Nations itself with the Muhajirin wal-Ansar Brigade, which is composed primarily of foreign terrorists. This group prevented the United Nations on two successive days from delivering aid to the villages of Nubul and Zahra and forced it to change the route of the aid convoy.

- The report continues to diminish the magnitude of the crimes and other actions for which armed terrorist groups are clearly responsible. One such example of this is the report's account of how terrorist groups cut the supply of potable water and clean water to millions of residents in Aleppo as punishment.

2. The Syrian Government deplores the continued attempts of some States and Secretariat officials to legitimize the violation of Syria's sovereignty under the pretext of delivering humanitarian assistance and to do so without the approval of the Syrian Government. These attempts, which come at a time when the report on the implementation of the resolution is to be presented to the Security Council, are a blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, the principles of international law and resolution 2139 (2014). In that connection, it should be noted that the presentation of inflated figures regarding humanitarian needs in certain parts of Syria is an attempt to justify this politicized and devious conduct. Syria condemns the distortion of the Charter by the Secretariat and its presentation of an inaccurate interpretation of the concept of sovereignty in order to legitimize the delivery of humanitarian assistance without the approval of the Syrian Government, including through border crossings controlled by terrorist groups. Such conduct is a stark violation of resolution 2139 (2014). Do the authors underestimate the intelligence of the readers and believe that they will only read the report but not understand it? The delivery of assistance to Kafr Hamra, Huraytan, Mayir, Ma'arat Artiq, Hayyan, Anadan, Nubul, Zahra and other places in the northern Aleppo countryside where terrorist groups are active refutes the slanderous remarks contained in the report that the Syrian Government is hindering the delivery of assistance to certain areas.

Syria rejects the recommendations of the Secretariat and advises it to resume being impartial and fair, avoid politicization and not to be a malleable instrument in the hands of certain Western States that are well known for their colonial history and ambitions, if it truly wishes to help those that have been affected by the Syrian crisis.

3. The report constantly attempts to come up with reasons to hold the Syrian Government responsible for hindering the delivery of assistance in order to avoid acknowledging the fundamental obstacles that are standing in the way of the Organization's humanitarian efforts. The most significant of those obstacles are terrorism, a severe lack of funding and lack of effectiveness and coordination on the part of United Nations agencies engaged in such work. Lack of funding continues to be a serious obstacle to the efforts of the Organization's humanitarian agencies to secure and deliver humanitarian assistance. Certain States continue to deny funds to the United Nations for political motives; much of those funds are being diverted illegally to so-called cross-border operations, in flagrant violation of resolution 2139 (2014). According to the report, of the $214.9 million collected, only $163.7 million was allocated for humanitarian response efforts inside Syria during the current period. According to the United Nations, this is a far cry from the $2.2 billion required to implement the 2014 response plan. These figures demonstrate how this financial vulnerability has affected the Organization's ability to execute the response plan and led to a decline in the number of persons receiving assistance in the period covered by the report. This situation raises concerns regarding the fundamental ability of the United Nations to shoulder its responsibility to provide humanitarian assistance.

4. Syria rejects the Secretariat's efforts to blame the Syrian Government completely for the gross failure of United Nations agencies to deliver humanitarian assistance. In that connection, we should like to note that, in the reporting period, the United Nations requested approval to dispatch aid convoys to the Homs, Idlib, Aleppo and Hamah countryside and to Rif Dimashq. According to the United Nations, these are all difficult-to-reach or besieged areas. The Government approved the majority of requests. An aid convoy entered Duma, Rif Dimashq, on 24 May 2014. This is the third time that humanitarian assistance has reached this area. However, no such assistance has reached Adra al-'Ummaliyah to date, despite the repeated requests of the Syrian Government.

5. References to incidents of the alleged use of toxic gas were forcibly introduced into certain parts of the report. These incidents do not fall within the scope of resolution 2139 (2014) and their inclusion is an attempt to confound the technical agency responsible for investigating these allegations following Syria's accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

6. In several instances, the report relies on dubious and unverified sources and misrepresents or alters information. For example:

- The report refers to violations allegedly committed in Aleppo Central Prison when neither the United Nations nor any other party is capable of determining their veracity because of the total siege that terrorist groups have imposed since the beginning of the year.
- In its account of the evacuation of fighters from the old city of Homs, the report claims that the evacuation was conditional upon the release of

government-affiliated individuals. We are surprised that the report used this designation to refer to a group of women and children who had been abducted by armed terrorist groups. The children in the group ranged from 7 months to 2 years of age. It is even more surprising that the United Nations should use such biased expressions, as though it was offering justification for incidents of abduction of women and children that the United Nations team had documented.

- The report claims to have documented information on attacks against schools, hospitals and houses of worship in the period from 1 January to 31 March 2014. Incidents that occurred between 22 April 2014 and the report's publication are supposedly documented.

- The report claims to have documented information on attacks against 53 schools, including at least two attacks that occurred in areas the United Nations has been unable to reach. This fact refutes the accuracy of the claims made. Which agency documented those attacks? How can the United Nations use such information without direct verification by its officials? The latter question is particularly relevant given that the United Nations has long relied on the excuse that it is unable to reach certain areas as a pretext for not using the information the Syrian Government provides it. Syria has repeatedly called on the United Nations to document the crimes that armed terrorist groups have committed against more than 3,004 schools. However, the United Nations failed to do this on the grounds that it was unable to reach the areas in which the attacks occurred. In 2012 and 2013, United Nations agencies reported the names of only 12 schools.

7. The procedure adopted by the Syrian Government for the issuance of visas has resolved this question definitively. The report nonetheless continues to raise this question in a manner that is both imprecise and subjective.

8. The Syrian Government is committed to facilitating the movement of trucks carrying aid in order ensure that assistance reaches all those who need it throughout the country. To rein in the chaos and alleviate the futility associated with humanitarian efforts, agreement was reached with the United Nations on 20 May 2014 regarding a new procedure to facilitate the movement humanitarian convoys and enable them to reach their destinations. The report incorrectly claims that, over a period of two weeks, some technical problems had occurred owing to what it calls a lack of harmonization among the relevant Government agencies and of a common understanding of the procedure for the movement of humanitarian assistance. It also claims that those problems had caused 150 trucks carrying aid to be stopped in various parts of the country and led to a decline in the level of assistance. On 14 May 2014, the World Food Programme office contacted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding those trucks. By 22 May 2014, the status of 121 of those trucks had been resolved, and the relevant agencies are looking into the status of the rest.

9. The report once again fails to mention the negative impact unilateral coercive measures have had on the Syrian people. In that connection, it should be noted that, in its 2013 report on the international economic situation, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs noted that the unilateral economic sanctions imposed by the United States of America and its allies have affected Syrian civilians' standard of living and their ability to meet their basic needs.

Fourth, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic affirms that it will continue to fulfil its constitutional duty to use every means to protect its citizens from the terrorist crimes that have been directed against them. Syrians have been the victims of terrorist bombings and daily rocket attacks that indiscriminately strike their homes, workplaces, educational and medical institutions, and religious and historical sites in all governorates. At the same time, the Government continues to strive earnestly to reach a political solution and bring about national reconciliation. This is Syria's national strategy. The success achieved in Homs is but one example of the fruits of that strategy and was preceded by successes in Rif Dimashq, Aleppo, Hamah and other governorates. The Syrian Government continues to make serious efforts to restore security and stability to areas that have been affected by terrorism, with a view to finding a political solution and saving the lives of civilians and returning them to their homes.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 70 (a), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative